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Edward B. Giller
Assistant General Manager for National Security

THRU: Major General Frank A. Camm, USA
Assistant General Manager for Military Application

STATUS REPORT ON ENIWETOK

Summary

Three U. S. Government agencies in particular have been engaged in considering the future disposition of Eniwetok Atoll. These are DOD (ASD/ISA and DNA), Department of the Interior, and AEC. The interests of each are understood to be as follows:

1. DNA and AFWL have been planning the conduct of a series of high explosive Pacific Area Cratering Experiments (PACE) on Runit Island.

2. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams (Department of the Interior) in April 1972 announced an intention of the U. S. Government to return the Atoll to the Trust Territory (of the Pacific Islands) by the end of 1973.

3. AEC will provide radiological cleanup support.

4. ASD/ISA anticipates DOD will conduct cleanup and plans an interagency meeting August 21, 1972, to discuss details. (See attached ASD/ISA memorandum.)

Several developments are taking place at the staff level to join the efforts of the respective agencies. Interagency staff meetings have been held between AEC (Division of Operational Safety) and DNA wherein technical data on contamination has been discussed and reviewed. A DNA sponsored, jointly manned health physics surveillance team is scheduled to visit Eniwetok for a week beginning July 26 to investigate the feasibility for resuming work on the PACE experiments. An additional team to develop data relating to cost and time estimates is planned by DNA for a week's stay beginning August 9; however, this does not appear to be particularly well conceived and probably will not provide the desired information.

It is understood that Chairman Schlesinger wrote a letter to Dr. Kissinger on June 16 summarizing details up to that date. I understand that this letter resulted in a request to Interior to "slow down" its talk about the immediate return of the Marshallese to the Atoll. Within AEC, Mr. John Ryan of the General Manager's office is overseeing staff efforts at the moment with the principal work being performed by the Division of Operational Safety.

Chronology

DNA has found it necessary to review its PACE planning as a result of a quarantine which was imposed on Runit Island on May 24, 1972. The present quarantine resulted from a survey which confirmed the existence of a significant level of radioactive contamination on the island. This PACE surveillance team, now scheduled to depart for Runit July 26, will provide the information by which DNA will decide whether to:

1. proceed with plans to use Runit Island,

2. abandon the island for another site, or

3. conduct the experiment on Runit using additional precautions.

This surveillance team will be comprised of eight members: Air Force Weapons Laboratory -- 2, DNA -- 3, AEC -- 2, and EPA(NERL) -- 1.

Preliminary cost and time estimates will also be developed under the aegis of DNA. AEC has offered its data and other technical assistance in developing these estimates. There is a difference of views between Mr. Roger Ray (NV) and Mr. Earl Eagles (DNA) over staffing, scheduling, and logistic support of the cost and time estimate study. Mr. Ray believes the AEC boat will provide inadequate transportation, that the survey should commence on August 2 vice August 9, and that Holmes & Narver engineers should be included. I concur with Mr. Ray. I would also like to note that DNA has, to my knowledge, made no attempt to define options, assumptions, or criteria to determine costs and times. Mr. Ryan has asked Dr. Biles to call Mr. Eagles to see what can be done to accommodate Mr. Ray's wishes, both as to scope and timing of the study. The subject of logistic support remains open.

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Potential Problems

Assuming that the Department of the Interior chooses to reaffirm the April 1972 statement of Ambassador Williams (about return of the Atoll by the end of 1973), a conflict in scheduling between Interior and DOD could well develop. A protracted PACE program would undoubtedly interfere with Interior's schedule for return of the Atoll. Even a limited PACE program will probably have some effect on Interior's schedule. No time appears to be left for cleanup. We may also be hard pressed to obtain data to support well considered decisions regarding release of the Atoll.

William W. Gay
Captain, USN
Assistant Director for Tests
Division of Military Application

Attachment:
Cy memo fm ASD/ISA to
DNA & AEC dtd 7/17/72

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